

# READING AND RELISHING

*Edited by Robyn Rowland*

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Like many poets, women poets in particular, I find the time to read poetry is constantly squeezed between snatched moments to write and the full tide of domesticity. It's interesting though, to have a look inside the reading lives of poets. Often, they give us directions in which our own reading might follow; often they introduce us to books and authors never discovered unless by word-of-mouth: our own e-mag. This section is a brief musing by a poet each month on their own reading of poetry, particularly the work they are enjoying. Hopefully, you'll want to go out and buy some more poetry!

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Our fourth contribution comes from **Alicia Sometimes**. Melbourne poet/writer/musician, she is co-host of 3RRR's spoken word and books show, Aural Text and has performed at many festivals and venues both locally and internationally. She has also performed in front of fish, on a tram, across the Nullarbor, with a stuffed horse and on ABC TV's Sunday Arts. Her first book *kissing the curve* is out through Five Islands Press. [www.aliciasometimes.com](http://www.aliciasometimes.com)

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## **Alicia Sometimes:**

As co-producer and presenter of a 'books, spoken word and writing' radio show I'm always delving into the world of poetry. Sometimes I'm enjoying it aurally and sometimes I'm devouring poetry books as if they were the last squares of caramel chocolate. As a writer I think it's so important to be reading all types of poems, taking in varying styles and visiting poems as you would another country. I like to sit in the hotel of a poem and peer off the balcony into the long streets of words. I like poem postcards, languid poems that stretch out over a weekend and the epiphany poem. I like to travel with the writer. This is why two books have stood out for me lately: *We Will Disappear* by David Prater (Soi 3 Modern Poets, 2007) and *Excess Baggage & Claim* by Terry Jaensch and Cyril Wong (Transit Lounge Press, 2007). Both are collections that talk of travel and journeys: the personal and the outside, the tourist and resident. Prater's book is lush with poems of places both ethereal and raw. He writes lyrically of technology, pop sensibilities and destinations. His poems can make me swoon or laugh depending on the piece. Jaensch and Wong have a collection that is a book of two parts, exploring their own view of the world encompassing many transient things such as relationships, karaoke bars and sexual encounters. Their poems are well-crafted rafts that move you through the ideas.

Visiting Hours by Canadian poet, Shane L Koyczan, (Mother Press Media, 2005) is another journey of language: these poems are for performance. The

strength in most poems is their ability to sizzle. The rhythm of the sentences and phrasing reels you in. Some pieces are simple and quiet and others, epic lyrics. Wonderfully, it comes with a CD. Three books published last year are treats: *Ash* by Alison Croggon (Cusp Books, 2006), *eyes in times of war* by Ali Alizadeh (Salt Publishing, 2006) and *a bud* by claire gaskin (John Leonard Press, 2006). All are gorgeous collections that are worth renting out a sea-coast house for. Alizadeh writes of his home country, Iran and the chaos of the world, both politically and personally. His poems are sharp and passionate. Gaskin writes of many things from the smallness of a snail in the ear of the buddha to the largeness of family lineage. Her poems are engaging and fresh. Croggon writes of beauty, wars, colours and the heart. Her writing is full and inspiring. She writes, 'The poet has no identity. She is an electrical cloud...' With Croggon I always feel like I'm about to be let in on many secrets. If I want to get further inspired there are about sixty-six poetry books I will go look at and read a line. Lately I've just revisited *New and Selected Poems* by John Forbes (A&R Modern Poets, 1992) and *Itinerant Blues* by Samuel Wagon Watson (UQP, 2002). And why not, they're both heavyweights who deserve my undivided attention.

Five hundred words is not enough to pen who you should read. This is more like a quick letter home. But before I close, I must say: read *The War Sonnets* by Barry Hill (Picaro Press, 2006), *Honey and Salt* by Angela Costi (FIP, 2007) and *Welcome/No Vacancy* by Ella Holcombe (FIP, 2007). They all go well with hot chocolate and I could re-read all many times.